

REMARKS

Claim 1 defines the invention as a storage assembly for a vehicle cargo area including a storage panel and a flange portion extending from the storage panel. The flange portion is adapted to be mounted to an interior component of a vehicle such that the storage panel is positionable to (1) a stowed position, in which the storage panel is generally parallel to a load surface of the vehicle cargo area, and (2) a deployed position for dividing at least a portion of the vehicle cargo area. New independent Claim 20 defines the invention as a combined cargo area and storage assembly including a cargo area including a wall and a floor and a storage panel that is essentially the same as defined in Claim 1.

The Examiner rejected Claim 1 as being anticipated by the Stevenson reference. This rejection is respectfully traversed in light of the amended language of Claim 1. Specifically, the Stevenson reference does not show or suggest a storage panel that is positionable to either (1) a stowed position, in which the storage panel is generally parallel to a load surface of the vehicle cargo area, and (2) a deployed position for dividing at least a portion of the vehicle cargo area.

The Stevenson reference discloses a hard cover and extender unit 30 that is supported on a bed 14 of a pickup truck 10. The unit 30 includes side members 32 and 34 that are pivotably connected to the side walls 18 and 20 of the pickup truck 10 so as to be movable between a first position illustrated in Fig. 1, wherein the unit 30 is wholly contained within the bed 14, and a second position illustrated in Fig. 4, wherein the unit 30 is extended beyond the bed 14. Thus, the Stevenson reference does not show or suggest a storage panel that is positionable to either (1) a stowed position, in which the storage panel is generally parallel to a load surface of the vehicle cargo area, and (2) a deployed position for dividing at least a portion of the vehicle cargo area, as recited in amended Claim 1.

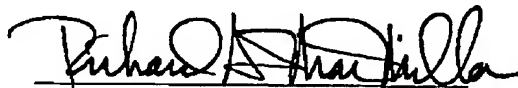
The Bott reference discloses a cargo restraint system that includes a beam member 20 that is supported on a pair of track members 16 and 18 contained in a floor 12 for both lateral and pivoting movement relative thereto. The Bott reference does

not show or suggest a flange portion extending from a storage panel and is adapted to be mounted to an interior component of a vehicle, as specifically claimed.

The teachings of the Stevenson and Bott references cannot be combined as suggested by the Examiner in connection with Claim 4 to render the claimed invention obvious. As discussed above, the Stevenson unit 30 includes side members 32 and 34 that are pivotably connected to the side walls 18 and 20 of the pickup truck 10, while the Bott beam member 20 is pivotably supported on a pair of track members 16 and 18 contained in the floor 12. Thus, the two structures function in manners that are quite different (pivotable mounting on the sides in the Stevenson reference vs. pivotable mounting on the floor of the Bott reference). Thus, the teachings of the two references cannot be properly combined.

Furthermore, even if the teachings of the two references can be properly combined, the resultant structure would be quite different from the claimed invention. A proper combination of the two references would result in the Stevenson unit 30 being supported on the pair of track members 16 and 18 contained in the floor 12, as shown in the Bott reference. However, the Stevenson unit 30 would have to be movable throughout a 180° range of movement in order to be operable. Therefore, the resultant structure would not meet the claimed limitation of a storage panel that is positionable to either (1) a stowed position, in which the storage panel is generally parallel to a load surface of the vehicle cargo area, and (2) a deployed position for dividing at least a portion of the vehicle cargo area. Accordingly, the claims distinguish the invention over the art of record.

Respectfully submitted,



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